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Datasheet for the decision of 20 January 2026

Case Number: T 0332/23 - 3.5.06

Application Number: 18847805.1

Publication Number: 3654175

IPC: G06F8/34, G06F8/38, G06F16/95

Language of the proceedings: EN

Title of invention:
TERMINAL DEVICE, UI EXTENSION METHOD, AND UI EXTENSION PROGRAM

Applicant:
NTT, Inc.

Headword:
Web page expansion/NTT

Relevant legal provisions:
EPC Art. 56
RPBA 2020 Art. 12(6)

Keyword:
Inventive step - (no)

Decisions cited:

Catchword:

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Boards of Appeal

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Case Number: T 0332/23 - 3.5.06

D E C I S I O N
of Technical Board of Appeal 3.5.06
of 20 January 2026

Appellant: (Applicant)	NTT, Inc. 5-1, Otemachi 1-chome Chiyoda-ku Tokyo 100-8116 (JP)
Representative:	Hoffmann Eitle Patent- und Rechtsanwälte PartmbB Arabellastraße 30 81925 München (DE)
Decision under appeal:	**Decision of the Examining Division of the European Patent Office posted on 22 November 2022 refusing European patent application No. 18847805.1 pursuant to Article 97(2) EPC.**

Composition of the Board:

Chairman	M. Müller
Members:	G. Zucka
	K. Kerber-Zubrzycka

Summary of Facts and Submissions

I. The appeal is against the decision by the examining division, dispatched with reasons on 22 November 2022, to refuse European patent application 18847805.1, on the basis that it did not satisfy the requirements of Article 56 EPC.

II. The following document cited during the first instance proceedings is referred to in the present decision:

D1: US 8 549 472 B1.

III. A notice of appeal was received on 20 January 2023, the appeal fee being paid on the same day. A statement of grounds of appeal was received on 9 February 2023.

IV. The appellant requested that the decision under appeal be set aside and a patent granted on the basis of claims 1 to 7 underlying the appealed decision.

V. The board issued a summons to oral proceedings. In the accompanying communication under Article 15(1) RPBA, the board set out its preliminary opinion, according to which the appealed decision should be upheld.

VI. On 19 December 2025, the appellant filed claims for auxiliary requests 1 and 2.

VII. The appellant requests that the decision under appeal be set aside and a patent be granted on the basis of claims 1 to 7 underlying the appealed decision (main request), or claims 1 to 7 of auxiliary request 1 or 2 filed on 19 December 2025.

The further text on file is:

description pages
1 to 25 filed with entry into the regional phase before the EPO;

drawing sheets
1 to 9 filed with entry into the regional phase before the EPO.

VIII. Claim 1 of the main request reads as follows:

"A terminal device (20) comprising:
a part specifying unit (2211) configured to cause the terminal device (20) to display a first graphical user interface, GUI,
that enables to specify settings relating to a display mode of a part constituting a web page, and
that accepts specification of settings relating to the display mode through the first GUI;
an action specifying unit (2212) configured to cause the terminal device (20) to display a second GUI
that enables to specify settings relating to an action of a part constituting the web page, and
that accepts specification of settings relating to the action through the second GUI;
an expanding unit (222) configured to expand the web page based on
the settings relating to the display mode accepted by the part specifying unit (2211), and
the settings relating to the action accepted by the action specifying unit (2212), and
to cause the terminal device (20) to display the expanded web page on a web browser (22) based on a response message;
an adding unit (21) configured to

acquire the response message transmitted from a web server (10), which is a device other than the terminal device (20), to the terminal device (20) in response to a request message transmitted from the terminal device (20) to the web server,

add a code of a program to cause the terminal device (20) to perform a function of the part specifying unit (2211) and the action specifying unit (2212) to the response message, and

return the response message to the web browser (22);

wherein the web browser is configured to interpret and execute the added code and to perform the functions of the part specifying unit (2211) and the action specifying unit (2212)."

IX. Claim 1 of auxiliary request 1 reads as follows:

"A terminal device (20) implementing a user interface, UI, expansion program that causes a computer to function as:
a part specifying unit (2211) configured to cause the terminal device (20) to display a first graphical user interface, GUI,

that enables to specify settings relating to a display mode of a part constituting a web page, and

that accepts specification of settings relating to the display mode through the first GUI;
an action specifying unit (2212) configured to cause the terminal device (20) to display a second GUI

that enables to specify settings relating to an action of a part constituting the web page, and

that accepts specification of settings relating to the action through the second GUI;
an expanding unit (222) configured to expand the web page based on

the settings relating to the display mode accepted by the part specifying unit (2211), and

the settings relating to the action accepted by the action specifying unit (2212), and

to cause the terminal device (20) to display the expanded web page on a web browser (22) based on an HTTP response message;

an adding unit (21) configured to

acquire the HTTP response message transmitted from a web server (10), which is a device other than the terminal device (20), to the terminal device (20) in response to an HTTP request message transmitted from the terminal device (20) to the web server,

add a code of a program to cause the terminal device (20) to perform a function of the part specifying unit (2211) and the action specifying unit (2212) to the HTTP response message, and

return the HTTP response message to the web browser (22);

wherein the web browser is configured to interpret and execute the added code and to perform the functions of the part specifying unit (2211) and the action specifying unit (2212)."

X. Claim 1 of auxiliary request 2 reads as follows:

"A terminal device (20) implementing a user interface, UI, expansion program that causes a computer to function as:

a part specifying unit (2211) configured to cause the terminal device (20) to display a first graphical user interface, GUI,

that enables to specify settings relating to a display mode of a part constituting a web page, and

that accepts specification of settings relating to the display mode through the first GUI;

an action specifying unit (2212) configured to cause the terminal device (20) to display a second GUI

that enables to specify settings relating to an action of a part constituting the web page, and

that accepts specification of settings relating to the action through the second GUI;

a rule DB (23) configured to store the settings relating to the display mode accepted by the part specifying unit (2211), and to store the settings relating to the action accepted by the action specifying unit (2212);

an expanding unit (222) configured to expand the web page based on

the settings relating to the display mode retrieved from the rule DB (23), and

the settings relating to the action retrieved from the rule DB (23), and

to cause the terminal device (20) to display the expanded web page on a web browser (22) based on an HTTP response message;

an adding unit (21) configured to

acquire the HTTP response message transmitted from a web server (10), which is a device other than the terminal device (20), to the terminal device (20) in response to an HTTP request message transmitted from the terminal device (20) to the web server,

add a code of a program to cause the terminal device (20) to perform a function of the part specifying unit (2211) and the action specifying unit (2212) to the HTTP response message, and

return the HTTP response message to the web browser (22);

wherein the web browser is configured to interpret and execute the added code and to perform the functions

of the part specifying unit (2211) and the action specifying unit (2212)."

XI. The wording of other claims is not relevant for the present decision.

XII. At the end of the oral proceedings, the chairman announced the board's decision.

Reasons for the Decision

1. The application

The application relates to user interface (UI) expansion (par. [0001]). UI expansion by means of conventional techniques is said to be difficult as it requires programming skills.

According to the board's understanding, claim 1 can functionally be summarised in that it relates to a terminal device which modifies a web page by allowing users to set display and action preferences via GUIs, adds code to enable these functions, and renders the adjusted page in a browser.

2. *Interpretation of claims*

2.1 In claim 1 of the main request, the nature of the "part specifying unit", "action specifying unit", "expanding unit" and "adding unit" is not expressly specified. Within the context of the claim, the board interprets these units as being part of a computer program executed on the terminal device.

2.2 Within the same claim context, the board interprets the "request message" and the "response message" as an HTTP request and response.

3. *Inventive step; Article 56 EPC*

3.1 The board holds that a suitable starting point for an inventive step analysis is the general prior art summarised in paragraphs [0001] to [0007] of the application, viz. the expansion of user interfaces (UIs), more specifically web pages, that comprise visual parts and associated actions. (The reasoning which follows does not rely on or make reference to the specific disclosure of the documents cited in par. [0004].)

It is further considered well known that, in order for a web browser to display a certain web page, typically an HTTP GET request will be sent to a web server. In response, the web server will send back an HTTP response message, typically an HTML web page.

3.2 As set out in the description (paragraphs [0005] to [0007], such UI expansion would, according to a classical approach, involve some coding.

This means that, typically, a UI designer who knows how to code web pages would first decide how the UI needs to be expanded, i.e. choose which visual parts and actions need to be added. After that, he or she would write the required code to ensure that a web browser displays the added visual parts and carries out the added actions.

3.3 The idea to automate such a designer activity would come up naturally, e.g. to save time or because the UI

designer may not always have sufficient coding experience. The person skilled in the field of automation would receive a requirement specification tasking him or her to automate the steps mentioned above.

3.4 That skilled person would thus provide means to carry out the following steps:

3.4.1 Allow a user, viz. a UI designer who does not necessarily know how to code web pages, to choose visual parts that will be added to the web page, i.e. "a part specifying unit configured to cause the terminal device to display a first graphical user interface, GUI, that enables to specify settings relating to a display mode of a part constituting a web page, and that accepts specification of settings relating to the display mode through the first GUI";

3.4.2 allow the user to choose actions that will be added to the web page, i.e. "an action specifying unit configured to cause the terminal device to display a second GUI that enables to specify settings relating to an action of a part constituting the web page, and that accepts specification of settings relating to the action through the second GUI"; and

3.4.3 expand the web page, via "an expanding unit configured to expand the web page based on the settings relating to the display mode accepted by the part specifying unit, and the settings relating to the action accepted by the action specifying unit", and eventually a unit is required "to cause the terminal device to display the expanded web page on a web browser based on a response message".

3.5 The web page expansion can take place before or after the web page is requested from the web server. In the former case, the expanded web page needs to be stored at the web server. In the latter case, the expansion could take place in the terminal or on the web server. During the oral proceedings before the board, the appellant defended the point of view that the skilled person would implement an expansion on the web server, given that the web server already contains the unamended code for the web page and would be better equipped to introduce any amendments to that code. The appellant pointed out that for instance in D1 the web page expansion takes place on the web server.

According to the board, however, it is, firstly, inherent to the rendering of web pages that tasks are divided between the browser side (the terminal) and the server side. The exact division of tasks would be determined by the skilled person according to the circumstances of a particular case.

Secondly, the skilled person is bound to encounter a situation where they have no control over a specific web server, e.g. because it belongs to a different company, thus prohibiting the implementation of any web page expansion at the server side. They would then have no other choice but to implement the expansion in the terminal device.

3.6 The expanded web page needs to be rendered correctly. The skilled person therefore also needs to provide means, in the terminal device (given that they have no control over the web server), to carry out the further steps:

3.6.1 Retrieve the original, non-expanded web page from the web server, i.e. "acquire the response message transmitted from a web server, which is a device other than the terminal device, to the terminal device in response to a request message transmitted from the terminal device to the web server";

3.6.2 generate the necessary code expanding the original web page (the response message), i.e. "add a code of a program to cause the terminal device to perform a function of the part specifying unit and the action specifying unit to the response message"; and

3.6.3 return the (expanded) response message to the web browser.

3.7 The web browser would render the expanded web page in the same manner as any other web page, i.e. "the web browser is configured to interpret and execute the added code and to perform the functions of the part specifying unit and the action specifying unit".

3.8 The skilled person would thereby arrive at the subject-matter of claim 1 in a straightforward manner, without the need for an inventive step.

3.9 In its response to the summons (point C.I.1), the appellant understood the skilled person in the board's reasoning to be a user interface (UI) designer, who would aim to automate the required steps for expansion of the user interface.

Such understanding is, however, incorrect: The skilled person in the board's inventive step reasoning is not a UI designer but a skilled person in the field of automation, who would automate the steps which a UI

designer who knows coding would execute, in such a manner that UI expansion can be carried out by a UI designer who does not know how to code.

3.10 The board consequently holds that the main request does not satisfy the requirements of Article 56 EPC.

4. *Auxiliary request 1*

Claim 1 of auxiliary request 1 contains clarifications which correspond to the board's interpretation of claim 1 of the main request. These clarifications, therefore, do not affect the above inventive step reasoning. The board consequently holds that the subject-matter of claim 1 of auxiliary request 1 is not inventive (Article 56 EPC).

5. *Auxiliary request 2*

5.1 The appellant provided no explanation why the amendments introduced in auxiliary request 2 addressed any new objections or reasoning introduced by the board in its annex to the summons. It is noted in this respect that although the board had started in that annex from a different prior art than in the appealed decision, the line of reasoning, in particular the conclusion that the skilled person would consider implementing the web page expansion in the terminal rather than in the web server, was in its essence the same.

The amendments in auxiliary request 2 could and should, therefore, already have been introduced in the main request or in an auxiliary request during the examination proceedings.

5.2 The board further notes that the amendment in claim 1 of auxiliary request 2, which consists in the introduction of a rule database storing the settings relating to the accepted display mode and action, is a trivial measure since said data would obviously need to be stored somewhere. The subject-matter of that claim is, therefore, *prima facie* not inventive.

5.3 For these reasons, the board does not admit the request under Article 12(6) RPBA.

Order

For these reasons it is decided that:

The appeal is dismissed.

The Registrar: The Chairman:

L. Stridde M. Müller

Decision electronically authenticated